

Parish Accounts 2023

These accounts are not what any of us would have hoped for but the picture isn't a totally bleak one, we have this opportunity to come up with some new ideas and an opportunity to come together not just in prayer but socially too. I also know the love and the passion you have for our parish. This was evident from the first day I arrived at St John's and continues. It is a privilege for me to serve as your Parish Priest and I am fully committed to working alongside you to allow our parish to flourish. I thank all those who have worked so hard for many years in our parish and may we pledge to support one another in the work ahead.

The parish accounts for 2023 are given with the account information from 2022 and 2021 to enable us to look at the current finances in context. The obvious headline is that there was a significant deficit in 2023 of £17,703.09. Such a deficit is a concern for all of us and is something that we need to reduce.

Two major contributory factors of the deficit are:

- Rising energy costs have affected everyone. Unlike households, there is no energy price cap for businesses and organisations. Our 2023 energy bills increased by £6586.20 on 2022. It now costs around £25 per hour to heat church, on a cold day it can cost up to £100 to warm and maintain heat in the church for Sunday Mass.
- As you are aware there are repair works that need to be carried out on the tower. It has been necessary to spend £3900 on surveys in preparation for the works.

2024 and beyond

It is important that we take time to reflect and to move forward with confidence. Obviously we need to consider how we can increase our income and we also need to consider areas where we can reduce costs.

As mentioned in the newsletter and discussed at the parish meeting on 3rd March, I would like us to establish a fundraising team. We need volunteers for this so if you are willing to join please let me know.

The two annual fundraisers for the parish are the bounty club and the garden party. I am very grateful for the time and effort that is put into these by our volunteers. but we are at a crossroads with these fundraisers. They are reliant on the same people year on year and some wish to step down after many years but we are unable to find parishioners who will take those roles on.

If we are going to be able to run these events, and others, it will need all of us where possible to give some of our time.

My hope is that through a renewed focus on supporting the parish through fundraising events we will also grow as a community, not just for those who regularly attend Mass but also encouraging and welcoming those who may have taken a pause in the practice of their faith.

Giving

I am aware that the cost of living crisis has had a detrimental impact on so many people but if you are able to increase your regular giving it would be greatly appreciated.

If you are a UK tax payer and haven't signed up for Gift Aid I would kindly ask if you could please do this. At no point do you need to divulge any of your personal financial situation and it means we can claim an additional 25p for every pound you donate. Last year we were able to receive £3359.52 from this scheme.

We have our card machine for contactless card payments. As cash becomes used less and less this offers an alternative way of donating very quickly on the way into church.

It is also possible to set up a standing order which will be paid directly from your bank account to the parish without having to remember each week or month.

Some parishioners are conscious of what it looks like if the collection bags are passed and they don't put anything in. I am sure that we all understand the different ways people make their donation so please don't feel uncomfortable to simply pass the bag to the next person.

Legacies are another way of donating to the parish. I know it can feel uncomfortable to think ahead to when our earthly lives end but I am sure many of us have a Will or are thinking about getting one. It could be that a set donation is in your Will or it could be that 1 or 2% is pledged meaning that you still continue to bequeath the majority of your estate to you family or other causes you support.

As we move into springtime, it's an opportunity for us to come together and look at how we can strengthen, build and renew our beautiful parish community. After the difficulties of Covid we have the chance to reach out to each other, invite friends and neighbours and those we have missed to rejoin our parish community. I hope we can meet together supporting existing projects and come up with new ideas to enable the parish of St. John the Baptist to flourish and grow not just in prayer but socially too.

In all we are striving to do let us ask for the intercession of St John the Baptist.

God bless,

Fr Chris